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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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BROILING, BOILING AND STEAMING FISH

Whether to boil or broil, when comes time to prepare your fish for table:

Here is no problem, when one well-tested factor is taken into consideration: is the fish fat or lean--that is, is its oily content high or low? In general, the rule is: boil the lean fish; broil the fat; and the exceptions may be a matter of personal preference or local custom.

Previous material, in this Lenten series released by the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, dealt with frying and sauteing methods; a subsequent one will concern itself with baking and planking. Here, the matter of boiling (or steaming) and broiling take the spotlight.

Broiling, it should be remembered, requires slightly more of the cook's time and attention than frying. To broil, first start the fire in your broiling oven so that it can be heating while you are preparing your fish; the broiling oven should be allowed to heat for 10 minutes before the fish is put in. Now, with the oven under way, dip the fish into a salt solution using the proportion of 2 tbsps. of salt to 1 cup of cold water; if the fish is of

average thickness, 5/8", allow it to stand about 3 minutes. Very thin fish need stand a shorter time--possibly 1 minute will suffice--while very thick fish can well be permitted to stand for as long as from 5 to 8 minutes.

If, by the time the fish is ready, the broiler pan has had the full 10 minutes of pre-heating, the pan should now be oiled. Next, coat the fish with cooking oil or melted butter and place it on the pan about 2 inches below the flame. If the skin has been left on the fish, the skin side should be on top and towards the flame.

In about 5 minutes the skin should begin to bubble and turn brown. Continue the cooking until the skin is covered with very dark brown bubbles. Turn fish but once, baste several times and cook until a rich brown, but try to avoid overcooking. Steaks or skinned fillets should begin to brown and cook in about the same length of time, from 6 to 12 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fish.

Pompano, halibut, and Spanish mackerel lend themselves particularly well to broiling, using these simple specific recipes:

Broiled Pompano

Roll the fish in oil and lay it in a very hot, well-oiled broiler. Broil and watch carefully, turning the fish from side to side until well done. Remove to a hot platter, garnish and serve with melted butter, lemon, or anchovy butter.

Broiled Halibut Steaks

Take steaks about one inch thick; lay them in salted water 1/2 hour; then marinate them in a bath of salad oil and lemon juice. Wipe dry and broil about 15 minutes until tender, carefully turning the steaks twice. Serve on a hot platter with parsley butter sauce.

Broiled Spanish Mackerel

Wash mackerel and split in half. Season with salt and pepper, then place on a well-greased broiler-rack. Broil on both sides, until tender, 10 to 15 minutes per side. Place on hot platter, sprinkle with cayenne and serve with a sauce made of 3 tbsps. melted butter and juice of 1/2 lemon. Allow 1/4 pound per person.

When it comes to purchasing fish for boiling or steaming, the lean type really comes into its own for firm-meated fish such as cod, halibut, salmon, red snapper, etc., is less likely to fall apart when subjected to either of these two methods of cooking. Another means of assuring that boiled or steamed fish will not break up in handling is to use a wire basket or a perforated pan in cooking, or to wrap the fish in cheesecloth before cooking. The flavor of boiled or steamed fish will be enhanced if the fish is cooked in any one of the following solutions:

Acid water--1 qt. of water and 3 tbsps. of lemon juice, or vinegar.

Salted water--1 qt. of water and 1-1/2 tbsps. of salt for each pound of fish.

Court Bouillon, or variations; milk, or milk and water, as described in any good cook book.

The stock from these boiling mediums, except the salt solution which is altogether too heavy in salt to be palatable, may be used in making fish soups and sauces.

Here is a very simple recipe for plain boiled fish, based on 2 pounds of fillets or steaks, or 3 pounds of whole fish.

Place one layer of the fish, cut to serving pieces, into an oiled basket or perforated pan and then into the boiling salted water. Cook 8 to 12 minutes until tender; remove and drain. Serve hot with a cream sauce or seasoned butter dressing.

And, now, here's another very easy-to-do recipe for cooking fish by the steaming method, using the same quantity of fish. Cover the fish cut into serving pieces with a solution made in the proportion of 2 tbsps. salt to 1 cup cold water, allowing it to stand from 2 to 8 minutes depending upon the thickness and variety of the pieces. Place the fish one layer deep, in a

well-oiled steamer and cook for 5 to 12 minutes, or until tender. Serve with a cream sauce or seasoned butter dressing.

Red Snapper with Tomato Sauce

3 lbs. red snapper	2 onions, sliced
1 qt. water	1 cup sweet cream
3 tomatoes	2 tbsps. butter
Celery and Parsley Root, diced	1 tbsp. flour
1 Carrot, diced	Salt and pepper

Salt and pepper fish and let stand several hours. Place 1 qt. cold water in kettle with onions, carrot, celery and parsley and boil. Add fish, whole or sliced. Add butter and tomatoes. Cook slowly until fish is done. Remove carefully to a hot platter. Strain the water and heat it thoroughly. Mix the flour in the cream, add to the water and cook until smooth. Garnish with chopped parsley, pour over fish and serve hot.

Steamed Whitefish

2 tbsps. butter	3 pounds whitefish
Salt and pepper	

Butter upper part of steamer, arrange cleaned fish in it, season, place over boiling water, cover and steam 15 minutes per pound. Remove skin before serving. Serves 6.

Species whose flavor is best brought out by broiling are: alewife, amberjack, hardtail, bream, brook trout, herring, jewfish, crevalle, grunt, channel, sea, and calico basses, chub, cod, haddock, halibut, kingfish, mackerel, mullet, pompano, porgy, rosefish, scup, swordfish, tautog, Spanish mackerel, tullibee, skipjack, Norfolk spots, and yellowtail.

Particularly adaptable to boiling (or steaming) are such species as bowfin, pollock, blue cod, candlefish, eulachon, and menhaden.

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